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## THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

25 JANUARY 1980

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## Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow, and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than Friday, February 15. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct, in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Editors should be addressed to the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8SE, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and results will appear in our issue of February 22.

Competition No 8  
1. The inaccessible he told me  
This, he said, was the reason

the cold he warmed.  
What Blake presaged, what  
Lawrence took a stand on,  
What Yeats looked up in  
fable, he performed.

The Times Third Readers are  
decoded, pigeon-holed for  
Tennyson's has been convicted  
of incessant self-abuse.

Dolus, a filthy pleasure, is, and  
And does, we straight repeat  
us of the sport.  
Let us eat then, rush blindly  
on to it,  
Like lustful beasts, that only  
know to eat.

For lust, will, language, and  
But this, thus, keeping endless  
Let us together closely lie,  
and sleep.

There is no labour, nor  
shame in this;  
This hath pleased, both pleasure  
and long will please; never  
Can this decay, but  
beginning over.

Competition No 5  
The result of competition No 5 will  
appear in next week's issue.

The pictures on the cover of this  
issue of the TLS are of Giacomo  
"Handa Holding the Vaid" (1950),  
and come from The Spirit of  
Realism (1950pp, Bloomington  
Indiana, Cleveland Museum of Art,  
Indiana University Press, £10.  
Edward B. Haering's extensive  
illustrated record of an exhibition  
held at the Cleveland Museum of  
Art during October and November

## Chewing on the cannibals

By Rodney Needham

## W. ARENS:

The Man-eating Myth  
Anthropology and Anthropophagy  
206pp. Oxford University Press.  
£5.25.  
0 19 502506 7

When four savages from Mississippi were brought to Fentalebelleu, in 1725, Voltaire seized the opportunity to speak with them. The solitary exchange that he reports from this encounter is that he asked one of them, a woman, if she had ever eaten men. An odd question to put, and so brutally, to a lady guest from foreign parts. When she replied, "tres neveu-ment" that she had, he himself rather shocked. A curious reaction, when he had been given just the answer that no doubt he looked for. If he was ready enough to ask his ingenious interlocutor if she was a cannibal, why was he scandalized when she admitted she was?

This ambivalence—namely the anxiety to be convinced of a repellent inhumanity on the part of other people—is a central theme of *The Man-eating Myth*. W. Arens was led to take it up by a student who asked why he was lecturing on kinship, politics, and economics and not on something "interesting" like cannibalism. At the time, Professor Arens was of the opinion that cannibalism in the past and present was a fairly common phenomenon, but when he inspected the ethnographic literature he was unable to uncover adequate evidence of cannibalism as a custom in any form for any society, and he became "dubious about the actual existence of this art as an accepted practice for any time or place".

Puzzled, he turned to his anthropological colleagues, and he also placed a notice in the *Newsletter of the American Anthropological Association* asking for eye-witness accounts of cannibalism.

He had only four written responses; three were unproductive and one was from a German graduate student, Erwin Frank, who had searched the publications on cannibalism in the Amazon basin from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries and had failed to discover "a single first-hand account of the act itself". Thus put on his mettle, Arens pursued the extended investigation of which the outcome is a book that is provocative, constantly

interesting, and in some regards profoundly consequential.

The work has two purposes: first, to make a critical assessment of reports of cannibalism; second, in the light of this evidence and the explanations advanced, to arrive at a broader understanding of the nature and function of anthropology over the past century. After an introductory chapter, the author deals in turn with the classic man-eaters (Caribs, Aztecs), recent man-eaters (Africa, New Guinea), the prehistoric world of anthropophagy (prehominids, early man, archaeological finds), the mythical world of anthropophagy, and finally the mythical world of anthropology. In the course of his study Arens is repeatedly "disturbed by the lack of documentation" and decides that all the cases he examines are spurious.

But if cannibalism is to that extent a fiction, why is it so often referred to as fact? Arens puts forward two answers. First, that only a group of people can oppress their own existence more meaningfully by censoring up others as categorical opposites, and "what could be mere distinctive than creating a boundary between these who do and these who do not eat human flesh?" Second, that anthropology depends in part on the existence of the savage; it has a "clear-cut interest in maintaining some crucial cultural boundaries—of which the cannibalistic boundary is one".

The case is presented in a quick and compendious fashion, and the publisher has produced it as a neat volume with apt and effective illustrations. Once in paperback, it will be a popular and almost indispensable title in anthropological courses of instruction, and it is likely to attract attention far outside university circles. Arens writes, moreover, in a direct and unpretentious idiom, with some quite nice touches of irony, aphorism, and sardonic humour.

But at the same time his style is remarkably uneven, sometimes clumsy or unclear, and many readers may conclude that anthropologists write as ill as sociologists are commonly said to do. Perhaps it is late in the day to protest that "data" is not a singular noun, but the copy editor could have prevented "perverse data" when "extensive" is what is meant. The author thinks, too, that an "avowal" is an assertion or allegation, that "vegery" is contrasted with "spicific" (and thus connotes vagueness), that "contemporary" is synonymous

with modern, that "improvident" means imprudent, and that "consciously" is the same as deliberately. Claims to have observed cannibals are described as "remipost" (sic, prominent); immoderate inclination is represented as "immodest"; evidence that he persisted for over 400 years is said to be "ephemeral" (sic, tenuous). All the same, it is the argument that counts, and it is undeniably challenging and well worth taking very seriously.

The immediate response to Arens's contentions is to call up a test case, best perhaps not one that he has examined. For an Indianist this is bound to be that of certain of the Batak peoples of Sumatra, who in works of reference are notorious for having been cannibals. They are thought to have been referred to as such by Herodotus, Marc Pele, and Nicolo Conti, and there are numerous assertions in nineteenth-century and later ethnographies that the Batak used to practise cannibalism. The custom has been so far accepted that the late Robert von Heine-Geldern pre-empted an historical comparison with Heruka, a terrible god of Vajrayana Buddhism in whose rites bloody sacrifices and perhaps even the eating of human flesh are held to have played a part. This "magical rite of degenerate Buddhism", it is suggested, was introduced into the literature on Batak civilization, and thereby to be certain on this score, would be the labour of a lifetime, but there are certain obvious sources that answer significantly to Arens's argument.

E. M. Loeb (*Sumatra*, 1935) is in no doubt that the Batak were cannibals until the present century. His chief authority, from whom he gets all his details, is F. W. Junghuhn, a famous naturalist who travelled among the Batak in 1840-41 and published his observations in *Die Battakier und die Battakische Sprache* (Beylin, 1847). Junghuhn, says Loeb, "witnessed" the practice of cannibalism during his stay in Toba, and it is with this assurance that Loeb quotes in translation a horrible account of what was done to the victim. One especially grisly

scene is that in which the rajah cuts a piece of flesh from the living person, drinks with gusto some of the blood streaming from it, and then roasts it on the spit.

The appetite of the Batak is not spoiled, it is lively reported, by the walls of the unfortunate sufferer as he sees his own flesh being roasted under his very eyes. Confirmation particulars are that it is usually "eight or ten minutes" (admirable ethnographic nicety) before the butchered man becomes unconscious, and a quarter of an hour before he dies.

This all sounds definite enough, but the source itself does not bear out the assertion that Junghuhn ever witnessed an instance of cannibalism. Although he once saw a human being in a stew, all he says on the relevant count is merely that during a year and a half in Batak country he learned of ("mir... belannt geworden") only three cases, in widely separated territories, of the public consumption of human beings. Some Batak, he relates, make no secret of their cannibalism, but so far as the evidence goes he himself never saw anyone actually eaten.

Another document, published in 1865, is a letter that had been written by E. Burton to Sir Stamford Raffles in 1822. It brings a disputed point whether any of our fellow men actually eat human flesh, writes the correspondent, he set out to ascertain in Tapanuli whether it were really the practice of the Batak. All the neighbouring Malays said it was (of course), and it was also commonly admitted by Batak themselves; some of the latter gave details of two men recently eaten—though Burton is happy to add that "not more than a fourth of the spectators could be induced to join in this horrible feast of human gore". Burton did not see anyone eaten, nor does he report (like Robinson Crusoe) having seen any material evidence that anybody had been.

Another authority of note is H. N. van der Tuuk, a Bible translator who went to Batak country in 1848 and discovered Lake Toba in 1853. In his great *Battakisch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek* (1861), he, too, describes a post to which is tied someone who is to be eaten, or part of whom is to be made into a calisson, but he does not at this place provide any visual evidence of the practice. What he does say is simply that the victim

is killed by a spear-thrust in the chest or the side, i.e. not by piece-meal carving.

A later traveller, E. Modigliani, writes in his *Fra i Botacchi indigeni* (1892) that in his journeys among the Batak he often risked being eaten, and that he has no hesitation in affirming that the Batak are cannibals. The categories of victim which he lists, however, are identical with those published by Junghuhn, and it is probably from this source else that he has other details.

A number of persons were eaten in 1840 and 1843, he says, and in 1883 a certain chief ate no fewer than eleven men; Modigliani knows this because missionaries told him so. Nevertheless, he candidly volunteers that if he were asked whether he had ever seen anyone eaten he would have to say no.

By 1909, when J. Warneck published *Die Religion der Batak*, cannibalism had become an "inconceivable aberration", and it was no longer possible to explain why it had ever been practised.

The outcome, then, is that whereas Batak told Burton, Junghuhn, van der Tuuk (apparently), and Modigliani that they were man-eaters, none of these authorities provides independent and direct evidence that they were. No justice of the peace would send anyone to gaol for a weekend on the basis of such testimony—and this is the star case of cannibalism in Indonesia. Yet the hold of the grim notion is so strong that even a Karo Batak, Professor H. Slagter, writing about his own people, has stated as recently as 1975 that "there has been no cannibalism among the Karo since the beginning of the nineteenth century", implying that before then there had been.

But in 1916 Lekkerkerker asserted that the Karo had "never in historical times" been man-eaters, and the *Encyclopedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (1917) states that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the practice was quite certainly "unknown" among the Karo.

Arens is clearly on to something important, therefore, even if he has not made his case very efficiently. An initial objection to his argument is that he does not define cannibalism. The people of Nias, off the west coast of Sumatra, were at one time head-hunters (more on this in a moment), and it is reported

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## Zero hour in the West

By Jeremy Hardie

WILFRED BECKERMAN (Editor): *Slew Growth in Britain—Causes and Consequences*. 237pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £7.95. 0 19 828420 9

The anti-growth theorists of the early 1970s should pray that in future their prayers are not answered. However, the threat was the good and economic efficiency of the 1950s and 1960s (at least in those of us who lived in Oxford, Hampstead, Boston or Rome), those years now seem a golden age. The consequences of low growth are not the horror stories that we were promised, but unemployment, frustration, poverty, social disintegration, and military vulnerability.

Of course, the collapse of industrialized nations has happened without any serious or careful plan to adopt the theories of Professor Meadows et al. and maybe if we had followed more carefully what they had to say we would have managed a smoother ride into decline than has been forced on us by inflation, famine, and the threat of nuclear war. But the chronic problem is how, if at all, we can return to the glories of increasing prosperity and reasonably secure employment. Those tantalizing and elusive possibilities were so commonplace a few decades ago that we came to despise them.

Wilfred Beckerman's book provides an extremely useful survey of the major problems of contemporary growth, or the lack of it. As is inevitable with such collections, there is too little coordination of ideas and lines of attack, and one or two chapters are rather one-sided. But most of the dozen essays are both clever and relevant.

Wilfred Beckerman's own contribution, and the piece by Frank Field on "Poverty, Growth and the

Redistribution of Income", deal with the most immediate and threatening effects of low growth. Since the war, we have comforted ourselves that the problem of poverty can be solved by ingenious social policies combined with ever-increasing growth. This optimism was justified. Whatever horrors remain, the poor in Britain are now a great deal better off than they were thirty-five years ago. But as Field shows, this is to the credit of our economic efficiency, not of our generosity or social engineering. The poor have got richer because the country has got richer, and they have shared in the improvement. When the improvement stops the poor stay poor. The test of our generosity is how we deal with the consequences of low growth when the country is no longer growing. The consequences of low growth are not the horror stories that we were promised, but unemployment, frustration, poverty, social disintegration, and military vulnerability.

It would be nice to blame the environmentalists for our present predicament, if only to get back at their complacency, ignorance and self-importance. But in fairness the other possible scapegoats must be listed. They are, in order of popularity, the trade unions, the government, and the Arabs. The book says little about the trade unions, and this is a pity. The position of addition of academic economists, which treat industrial relations as a footnote to microeconomics, to be dismissively explained away in terms of market imperfections and institutional friction.

Michael Posner however has a good deal to say about the Arabs, or rather about the problem of oil shortages of energy. His cheerful conclusion is that for the United Kingdom, at any rate, if energy were to cost in the year 2000 something like four times its 1975 cost in real terms, then that high and rising price might cause a reasonably knock-half a percentage point off the UK growth rate in the meantime. The assumptions he uses,

and the confessed crudity of his arithmetic, mean that this is at the upper limit of the likely. The modesty of this conclusion, and its apparent absurdity in the light of what anybody can see by looking out of the window at the real world, shows clearly how much growth and its continuance depends on confidence, expectations, and deplorably unquantifiable psychological factors (as Posner of course is fully aware). It is quite right that if you consider the energy problem narrowly in terms of resource shortage, structural adjustment, enforced changes in technology, and so on, it does not amount to much—no more than would a small but steady deterioration in the climate of the Northern Hemisphere, which would be accepted quite equably without any fantasies about the end of civilization as we know it. But if the damage to sea level, to the environment, to the health of the world, and to the morale of the world, is as great as the need for the ability to invest, and economic growth disappears.

As for governments, David Stout and Stanislaw Genukka argue convincingly that the problems of low productivity and poor investment in British industry are much more complex than politicians and civil servants hope. On the whole, growth policy in Britain has been to do with industrial investment and has operated either via direct subsidy, or by indirect encouragement through bursts of increased consumption, to make business expand capacity, improve technology, lower costs, complete better abroad and thus slip the entry into the virtuous circle that has made the German and Japanese rich. But as Stout points out, it is more likely that the low investment levels in Britain since the war are a symptom of low growth, not its cause. British industry is bad at getting high production out of its work force and its physical assets, and its failure means high costs, poor competitiveness, and therefore neither the need nor ability to invest. And Genukka's common sense list of the factors which cause productivity

growth—openness in new technology, worker commitment, engineering skills in management, luck with the exchange rate, and so on—show conclusively that there is no one point of pressure which the authorities can choose as the key even to an improvement in industrial performance, and that many of the causes of our decline are incommensurable or inaccessible to outside intervention.

One of the main lessons of the book is that since the war we have just been very lucky, and now our luck has run out. There is no reason in principle why the 1980s should be like the 1950s. Anyone with imagination can make up a story for the West of industrial optimism, rising prosperity, a contented labour force, and persistent growth—wholly plausible, particularly as it is simply a projection of what we have known most of the time over the two decades to 1970. But this coincidence of happy events is very much all or nothing. As soon as any link in the chain is broken, the virtuous process collapses; and any one of a number of checks can prove fatal. You can blame if you wish the oil crisis of 1973, or the uncontrolled inflationary boom which preceded it, or industrial labour force, or the 1960s sun spots, or what the chairman of the top 100 corporations in the world had for breakfast.

Whatever the reason, for one reason or another most businessmen and spenders now feel pessimistic about investment and consumption, and their pessimism makes them right. As Chris Alissepp and Angus Maddison argue, the world was rich in the 1960s because a good number of economies—Japan, Germany, France—were lucky enough to have most of the things which lead to industrial success—an agricultural labour force ready to switch into industry; undervalued currencies which promoted exports; and above all a very substantial technical lead. The United States which could be made up comparatively easily by investing in the right technologies. It is not only the Japanese

who have got rich by imitating Americans. Many of all of the factors have now disappeared—like the technical gap for example the confidence that in investment until we are too late to get them again.

The policy consequences of this are rather gloomy. You do of course decide that the source of growth is so complex, mysterious and beyond government control that the best they can do (and it is not much) is to create a tolerable secure environment in which growth can flourish, if they are there. It is not, you had, that view, that you need to hold it with reason and optimism, is the reason for sticking with Mrs Thatcher.

The only really serious heresy in the dominant tradition of the nascent interventionist movement is his advocacy of protection. His proposals are really not so radical as they seem. He is simply a projection of what we have known most of the time over the two decades to 1970. But this coincidence of happy events is very much all or nothing. As soon as any link in the chain is broken, the virtuous process collapses; and any one of a number of checks can prove fatal. You can blame if you wish the oil crisis of 1973, or the uncontrolled inflationary boom which preceded it, or industrial labour force, or the 1960s sun spots, or what the chairman of the top 100 corporations in the world had for breakfast.

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beanpole-tall, wasp-waisted, who have got rich by imitating Americans. Many of all of the factors have now disappeared—like the technical gap for example the confidence that in investment until we are too late to get them again.

## CATCHING UP

The Papers of the Founding Fathers, Marching on, unaffected as yet by the ravages of time, are yet to be seen. The papers of the Founding Fathers, Marching on, unaffected as yet by the ravages of time, are yet to be seen. The papers of the Founding Fathers, Marching on, unaffected as yet by the ravages of time, are yet to be seen.

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## 1: America past and present

By Esmond Wright

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Elmo Richardson offers a new interpretation of the Eisenhower presidency and challenges the prevailing notion that it was a passive, uninterested and uninterested chief executive, surrounded by a "police guard" that made the real decisions. The use of the recently opened archives in the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas—occupying more than a mile of shelf space—has enabled Richardson to offer in his brief career an unusually favourable view; his supportive bibliographical essay in itself will become a valuable introductory reading for future studies of the 1950s.

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The varied character of the Empire State is caught in chatty fashion by David McDwyn Ellis. His *New York: State and City* is just history, part economic survey, but it is always readable and appealing. Ellis is a student in the present of New York's early days; the gap is met by Henri and Barbara van der Zee in *A Sweet and Alien Land*. There is nothing especially novel in their story, and it is told in a workmanlike rather than elegant prose. But it is useful to have this little-chronicled period brought to life, and there are some excellent illustrations of both Old and New Amsterdam.

Of New York City in the 1930s, it used to be said that in its tiny congested area—140 square miles on way, on the other hand—there were more Jews than in Palestine, more Irish than in Dublin, and more Italians than in Rome—and that the political strength of its mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, was not just his Italian ancestry but his Portuguese Jewish mother and that somehow he could also claim a Greek grandmother. To this complex and politically cut-throat world of ethnic rivalries Rosalind Boyer gives a useful, statistically buttressed guide.

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# At the cultural crossroads

By Malcolm Colledge

CLARK HOPKINS:  
The Discovery of Dura-Europos  
Edited by Bernard Goldman  
306pp, Yale University Press, £12.60,  
0 300 02286 3

"Historical treasure trove" is the phrase used here to describe the extraordinary archaeological discoveries made at Dura-Europos in the 1920s and 1930s, and it is hardly an exaggeration. Year after year the Euphrates city yielded finds which revolutionized studies of the Hellenistic Greek world, the empire of the Roman Parthians, the Roman east, early Christianity, and Judaism in the first centuries of our era. So it is fortunate indeed that the longest-serving field director of the dig was able, before his death four years ago, to set down his account of how the finds were made. The manuscript, not quite complete at his death, has been sympathetically edited by another leading Dura scholar, Bernard Goldman.

The creation of Dura-Europos was the result of the Greek occupation of Asia which followed the whirlwind eastern conquests of Alexander the Great. At his untimely death in 323 BC Alexander, leaving the ruins of Greece, had conquered a Near Eastern empire that stretched from Anatolia and Syria to the Punjab. This western Asiatic domain fell to his general Seleucus, soon to be self-styled king; only Seleucus and his Hellenistic Greek successors continued their master's policy of merging Greek and oriental cultures, not without protest on either side. To hold the empire, cities were founded at strategic points. One such was Dura-Europos, placed by Seleucus on a high bluff that rose on the right (or Syrian) bank of the middle Euphrates river, in northern Mesopotamia. Its considerable size and massive walls indicated its purpose: to act as a stronghold controlling the district around, policing the desert, protecting the caravan routes and keeping the nomads at bay.

The role that Dura-Europos played in the chequered history of Mesopotamia during nearly six centuries of existence, as revealed by the excavations, is outlined in

the book's final chapter. Although a Greek foundation and a town in which Greek families long remained influential it became a polyglot centre, whose mixed culture was typical of the area. Numerous aspects of its life have been highlighted by an unusually rich harvest of documents, from formal stone inscriptions to parchments and papyrus, and scratched and painted graffiti in Greek, Aramaic, and later Latin, Hebrew and Parthian.

The founders tried hard to create a Greek town, bestowing upon it their typical grid-plan of streets, administrative police, market-place (agora) and walling. But set in a Semitic sea it was doomed to become orientalized, a process hastened by events late in the second century BC. The Iranian Parthians, once subjects of Seleucus' successors, had progressively taken over ever larger areas of their empire, until now they had reached the Euphrates, swallowing up Dura-Europos. Under Parthian rule the town prospered and the Greek market-place filled with little lanes of shops, became an eastern bazaar. Temples to oriental deities arose, and houses assumed a Mesopotamian character. Finally, about AD 165, the Romans seized and occupied Dura-Europos, contributing a group of military and administrative buildings, temples and, of course, baths. This is the best-known period of the town which continued to prosper until danger threatened in the mid-third century. Huge ramps of earth were hastily thrown up to strengthen the walls, engulfing private houses on the inside, but in vain: about 256 the town fell to the Sassanid Persians, and was forever destroyed.

Students of Classical culture were awed by the wealth of information that poured from the dig. Light was suddenly shed on very many different aspects of ancient life, administrative and religious, art-historical and domestic. Three contributions in particular proved dramatic. The first concerned the mixed culture of the Parthian empire, compounded of elements from the earlier Near East, the Greek inheritance and the contemporary world, whose manifestations varied from one culture to the next; particularly striking was a health developed among artists from the turn of our era, of making figures on a plane surface frontal. The second was Christian: one of the

houses engulfed by the ramp had been turned to Christian uses, and featured among its painted wall-decorations a bearded Christ. Third, and most astonishing, another house buried by the ramp had been recently converted into a synagogue, and its walls were covered with paintings, fully described here, which depicted scenes from the Old Testament in three superimposed registers apparently in flagrant defiance of the Jewish prohibition of images, a surprise widely debated ever since.

But it is the people, rather than the issues, connected with the Dura-Europos dig that emerge from Clark Hopkins' pages. A series of chapters chronicles the excavation campaigns, and the great scholarly notes of his generation spring to life, not always creditably. Chief among the moving spirits were Franz Cumont and the indefatigable Michael Rostovtzeff, who organized the joint French and American expedition. Difficulties were immense. Funds were a perennial problem. The site was often threatened by nomad attack. Wind, dust, insects and sickness assailed the excavators and personality clashes erupted, resulting in quarrels over everything from where to dig to the provision of latrines. The workmen had to be paid in gold and silver coin, which made the fetching of their wages a nerve-racking business. Two scholars invited to assist secretly collected information which they then published without permission (one got a Vatican medal for it).

Those disposed to cowl may find Professor Hopkins' touch less sure in the parts of his narrative where he is describing events at which he was not personally present. They may be disappointed by the quality of the photographs. They may bewail the nineteenth-century method of excavation prevalent at the time, with hundreds of workmen toiling together in huge gangs and being paid by the day. But Hopkins has had the courage to reveal what he found. They may lament the author's carelessness in allowing a hundred fragments of the precious synagogue wall-paintings to be destroyed by rain, just after they had been discovered. But Hopkins has had the courage to reveal what he found. They may lament the author's carelessness in allowing a hundred fragments of the precious synagogue wall-paintings to be destroyed by rain, just after they had been discovered. But Hopkins has had the courage to reveal what he found.

## Annunciation

It seems I must have been more fertile than most to have token that wind-blown thistledown softly-spoken word into my body and grown big-bellied with it. Nor was I the first. There had been rumours of such goings-on before my turn came—tales of swansdown. Mine had no wings or feathers actually, but it was hopeless trying to convince them. They like to think it was a mystical encounter, although they must know I am not of that fibre. And to say I was "troubled" is laughable. What I do remember is a great rejoicing, my body's arch and flow, the awe, and a great ringing and singing in my ears—and then the world stopped for a little while. But still they will keep an about the Word—which is their name for it—even though I've told them that is definitely not how I would put it. I should have known they'd try to take possession of my ecstasy and swaddle it in their portentous terminology. I should have kept it hidden in the dark web of my veins—though this child grows in me, not unwanted certainly, but not intended on my part. The risk did not concern me at the time, naturally. I must be simple to have told them anything. Just because I stressed the miracle of it, they've wondered it about the place that I'm immaculate. But then they always were afraid of female sexuality. I've pondered these things lately in my mind. If they should canonize me (setting me up as chaste and meek and mild) God only knows what nonsense they'll visit on the child.

Sylvia Kantaris

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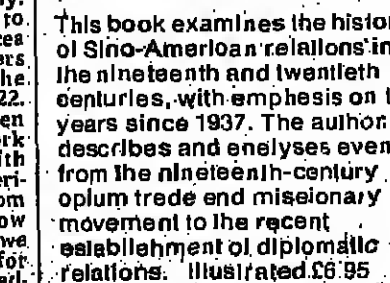






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# The analyst as autocrat

By Galen Strawson

**SHERRY TURKLE:**  
*Psychoanalytic Politics*  
 Freud's French Revolution  
 278pp. Burnett Books. £6.95.  
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"Lacan disperse les siens." On January 11 *Le Monde* gave a front-page headline across three columns to the news of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's unilateral dissolution of the Ecole Freudienne in Paris, of which he had until then been president. The same issue carried the text of a finely contorted and minatory letter from the Master announcing his decision, and promising that he would upon request write an account of the development of the psychoanalytical movement in France, its members, and its institutional fissions and fusions at the centre of which he stood, and would therefore permit to continue in association with him. And he warned: "Je n'ai pas l'intention de beaucoup de monde. Et si y a beaucoup de monde dans le monde, je n'en ai pas besoin."

Whether this mandarin decision was his to make thus unilaterally is now and will be a matter for legal dispute. The Ecole appears to be covered by a law of 1961 concerning associations which makes a two-thirds majority in a general vote a condition of dissolution; and several members have already taken steps to contest Lacan's decision by legal means. But most of those directly involved regard such action as futile, and already a new group is crystallizing about Lacan, "une Société des amis du crime", as Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan's son-in-law and faithful lieutenant, has put it, evidently savouring the importance of the "allusion" disguised.

"Psychologists is an attempt of rigour. In that sense I would say that I am psychotic," Jacques Lacan does not resign from his post at the head of the institution he has founded: he sacks the whole institution. Whatever the outcome of the present events, they promise to form one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the psychoanalytical movement in France which Sherry Turkle has taken as her subject in *Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud's French Revolution*.

Evidently, it is to an account of the past that one must turn for an understanding of what makes psychoanalysis quarrel with Lacan. Freud prophesied to 1914 that "the final decisive battle" for psychoanalysis would take place "where the greatest resistance [had] been displayed". Justly wary of America's too easy acceptance, he suspected a dilution and distortion of his most vital and therefore most unacceptable doctrines. France had a good claim to be among Western countries the one which resisted Freud longest. But it would be a mistake to suppose that this is simply because the French, famed for their sensitivity to matters psychological, have always more truly appreciated the subversive and unacceptable aspects of psychoanalysis: just as it would be wrong to think that there were not good reasons why Americans in the 1960s were in a better position than the French both to understand and to accept the darker truths of Freudianism.

One of the things Professor Turkle undertakes in her book is a "sociology of superficial knowledge", a study of the diffusion of psychoanalytical ideas in popular culture. She gives a clue as to a different reason for French resistance: "one half of the representative sample of Parisians whom I interviewed in 1974 had definitely gotten the message that psychoanalysis was a seductive 'law' and a recent French discovery. Glossy magazines carry features on psychoanalysis, or even more incredibly, *nouvelles de Paris*. If France was unique in its resistance to psychoanalysis, it is especially paradoxical because it was not still a fringe in the West. In its cultural chauvinism—not to say arrogance—rather than because of any supposed superior ability of the French better to understand the true nature of Freud's theories and therefore more fiercely resist them, it is tempting to suspect that if Freud had been English, French resistance would run as high as ever."

While France is more open to the influence of German thinkers, it seems nevertheless to be a precondition of such influence that some indigenous hero arise, whether it be Jean-Paul Sartre, or, as now for philosophy, or, as now for psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan; and that he be seen somehow to surpass and outdo behind him his foreign inspirations. That Jacques Lacan's fame was initially founded on his "return to Freud" is easily compatible with this precondition, as it is also with the popularly diffused belief that psychoanalysis is a recent French discovery; for Lacan's return to Freud is only first based on an entirely French home run from Lacan to Lacan.

So it is that Professor Turkle's book, while designedly general in its sociological perspective and in its overall aims as an account of the development of the psychoanalytical movement in France, is mostly about this one man, Lacan, and the doctrinal and institutional fissions and fusions at the centre of which he stood, and would therefore permit to continue in association with him. And he warned: "Je n'ai pas l'intention de beaucoup de monde. Et si y a beaucoup de monde dans le monde, je n'en ai pas besoin."

One may sympathize with the French "autoprologues", Dan Sperber, whom, in the course of comparing the Lacanian belief-system with that of an Ethiopian tribe, he confesses that "for my part, I am incapable of conceiving a true statement that would conform to the sense of the unconscious" as structured like a language, and he appeals to the arbitrariness of the theory that appears to accord some irreducible theoretical significance to the fact that "le mot du père" and "le non" du père "not to mention Lacan's 'non' are in one language. But Lacan's attack on American psychoanalysis, with its concept of the psyche's "conflict-free zone", is in many respects devastating.

For the ego is hopelessly misconceived as possessed of, or restoring to, some kind of "personal integrity"; it is, rather, an essentially fragmentary entity, "formed from a composite of introjections based on misrecognition and built out of alienating identification"; a thing of contradictions and dark complexity, of transient and contradictory plurality, a "fiction" in at least something of the sense of the psychoanalyst, although organized about deep and constitutive psychological contradictions. This, seen as the true pole of the ego, theoretically posited as the object of psychoanalytical intervention, but also of the more everyday "I"—at least as it appears under the gaze of concerned introspection; and Lacan's theory gives a sympathetic (and selective) interpretation, has much to offer not only in its general position, but also in the specific details of its account of the genesis and nature of the self. His pronounced impossibility is not caused by, but undoubtedly liberates, considerable subtleties of thought.

Relatedly, Lacan is making an important point by divorcing his conception of the nature of the analytic process from a standard conception according to which it is above all a process of cure in order to present it as essentially a process of discovery of "the truth of the subject" to which a notion of cure is more or less irrelevant. To many, psychoanalysis seems only dubious and ineffective, because more of therapy, but vital as a means to the advancement of the theoretical understanding of the nature of the human psyche. Freud too, in sometimes expressing the view that, simply as therapy, analysis could have no further aim than to re-establish or indicate a pattern of neurosis that was socially acceptable, or more generally "desirable" implied—as he did—also in

"Analysis Terminable and Interminable" that the nature and aim of analysis, extended far beyond its merely therapeutic function.

But to what extent can Lacan's virtues as a theorist offset his vices as an intellectual, personal, institutional? Many of the traits discussed by Turkle for which Lacan has been criticized are by now fairly well known. There is the twisted opacity of his writings; on which he has this remarkable thing to say: "it is an empirical fact that after ten years what I have written becomes clear to everyone." To two classic objections, "Ce qui se conçoit bien s'énonce simplement", and "Si non vis intelligi, debet negligi" he has, indeed, responses; his texts are designed not merely to transmit information but to do something to their readers by some essentially non-cognitive means. Again, they attempt not only verbal description but direct illustration of the verbal trickery of the unconscious's ways and means. Turkle cites Wittgenstein's Joyce and the surrealism in her defence of his defence; but it is clear that Lacan, in declaring his wish that his writings be hard to understand, did not have in mind what Wittgenstein had in mind when he wrote "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking."

What is perhaps most unerving about the intellectual style of the currently fashionable French *nuîtres penseurs* is the way in which it is at times so obvious that the sense follows the sound, and so, rather than the other way about, Lacan's defence is not without a point, but to licence obscurity as having a specific theoretical purpose is to licence something susceptible of almost unlimited embellishment, and of being of angelic brilliance and intellectual honesty could be trusted with, or trust itself with. And none of us is so endowed.

Then there are his notoriously short analytic sessions. One patient of his whom met recently told me how one of his sessions (which cost 1,000 new francs—about £110) lasted barely a minute, and was conducted by Lacan at the entrance to his apartment, through a door barely ajar. Sessions of between three and ten minutes' length

are standard. Doubtless such a practice concentrates the mind wonderfully; but to defend it with talk of the value of so using time to "punctuate the analysis" looks like *ex post facto* justification of the worst kind.

Thirdly, there is Lacan's boundless intransigence and authoritarianism, notably as the head of the Ecole Freudienne, and more recently as director of the Champi Freudien, the department of psychoanalysis in the University of Paris at Vincennes. Turkle documents this aspect of Lacan of great length, and notes that his demand for unconditional fidelity, so similar to Freud's before him, contradicts his own teaching about the need for each analyst to maintain his own sense of discovery, doubt, and judgment and never, under any circumstances, to abandon them for an indication of a *Maître*. "When some members of the Ecole put such objections to Lacan, he insisted—ironically for an analyst, as Turkle says—that he had 'no need to explain himself on the matter.' The Ecole's ideological stance is not actually democratic structure as witnessed under Lacan's *de facto* autocratic imperialism. All articles published in the Ecole's journal, *Sciences*, were anonymous except for Lacan's own. One would think that irony of the journal's name in such circumstances, could hardly escape someone as word-wise as Lacan, unless he was the helpless prisoner of his own double standards. Perhaps he understood it thus: "it is permitted to know what I (and only I) think."

On these and many other issues Professor Turkle is steadily informative; there is discussion of the timing of sides over the problematic claim that "the training analysis is the only pure analysis"; of the connected and extraordinary issue of *la pose*—the issue, that is, of the surveillance of the training analysis and of the training's authorization to practise, disagreement about which occasioned another schism, and the forming in 1969 of the *Quarzième Groupe*, the "Lacanians without Lacan". She also discusses Lacan's controversial licensing in 1976 of one-analyst therapists to train clinicians as well as other theorists. This last move, emblematic to orthodox psychoanalysis, was right in line with his general tendency to

exalt theorists and theory over practitioners and practice, a tendency which has manifested itself most unthinkingly, of late, in his increasing concentration on the seemingly ludicrous idea that there is a mathematical minimum to psychoanalysis, a core of mathematically formulizable truths about the psyche.

Jacques-Alain Miller is the principal champion of psychoanalytical "mathematics". He holds that they capture something universal and basic; they are like those parts of speech that do not need translation when one translates from one language to another. The comparison seems inept, for he presumably does not think they are like proper nouns. Again, "they are formulas made up of 'high letters' because only such symbols lack all significance of their own". In this it may summarily be replied that as long as no significant given to the symbols in the formal language it remains a wholly meaningless system, of transformations governed by purely syntactical rules; whilst as soon as the symbols are given an interpretation they lose all their neutrality and have as much "significance" of their own "as any other word or symbol." It is foolish to suppose that there can be any real gain in clarity or any attainment of precision or otherwise senseless, and unenriched, guidelines by this means. The idea that there are any basic psychoanalytical truths that cannot be adequately expressed with the resources of a normal language is in any case deeply implausible.

Clearly, there are many tensions and contradictions not only between Lacan's theory and practice and their more orthodox counterparts, but also between his theory and practice of different times, as well as between his theory and his practice of a given time; not a day between his theory and his at a given time.

It might be held that there is some sort of defence available for this last phenomenon. For the theory is a theory that predicts and studies its own conflict. And Lacan has always insisted upon the essential insufficiency of psychoanalytic theory. But this tactic is of course itself deeply at odds with the idea of the fixed "mathematisable minimum". Thus even the general policy of tolerating conflict conflicts with another part of the theory, to which, in the end, there seems to be a place free from contradiction, to which to stoke a self-contained synthesis of oppositions and contradictions. Readers of Lacan will perhaps do best to combine a concentrated scepticism with the glowing talents of the manic. Some at least will certainly find it worth the trouble.

Sherry Turkle's book will help a conscious many of this. Her manner is so attractively generous that it overdoes Lacan's hostility to Lacan. The principal faults of the book are a tendency to reiterate the same point, often virtually verbatim; and a failure, in places, adequately to take into account the explanatory material—especially in the discussion of the determinants of the different faces of psychoanalysis in France and America, and in the analysis of the causes and effects of the events of May 1968. Turkle's analysis of "we" is on odd path, but not just a studiously subjectless cypher, rather of the putatively neutral discourse of scientific sociology; nor the "we" of self-avowedly established—or self-avowedly established—"we" which is often as much a device as a goal, as it appears to include the reader, or not—"we" does not—so much as establish, believe, or conclude, or that; rather "we" begins a "we" in such and such a way, "we" learn, such and such, "we" learn, such and such.

But these are minor deficiencies. Professor Turkle's book makes an important contribution to debate and should be a valuable agent of approach. For once one gets the facts straight about Lacan and his works, what need can there be to bury abuse? Lacan's influence caused a great deal of suffering, but his influence was not just a good he has done in any plausible and realistic calculus. And Lacan's *nuître pas pas* is not the fact that he should be so much in the world as he is. But why should we be so much in the world as he is? It is to be hoped that psychoanalysis will go a long way towards settling this question, and that it will go a long way towards settling it on a more appropriate

## CATCHING UP-ART HISTORY

# 1: British traditions

By David Piper

In his Romanes lecture last year Sir Hugh Casson deplored the lack of close scholarly attention paid to applied design (eg. workbooks and Matisse in comparison with the ceaseless investigations by art historians into fine art—yet another book on some famous name or other. The President of the Royal Academy's criticism has indeed some justification (and how refreshing to hear it from such a source), and the batch of books on aspects of British art published in 1979 that are here surveyed to fact include further contributions to the study of Hogarth, Turner, Constable and others. The best of them however are far from retreading known ground—and those on Turner are particularly valuable reminders of how poor neglect of our own great masters is only now being remedied—while among more general books Dennis Farr's *English Art 1870-1940*, extends its scope to embrace rather cabinets in booklets or luggage labels.

Even so, Farr acknowledges "perfunctory" treatment of some minor artists, and records regretfully the absence of almost any mention of photography. Valuable in this series is itself an old-fashioned concept, but nevertheless useful one—necessarily slow in brewing. Farr admits to fifteen years in the preparation of this one, and were he starting now he probably would not have dreamed of omitting photography.

Reassessment of art in the first half of the twentieth century, impelled, I sometimes feel, as much by death of significance in current art as for any other reason, proceeds at such dizzy speed, that the shape of the period and the character of its constituent objects seems to shift yearly if not monthly. Books such as this inevitably provoke reviewers to knowing comment on omissions, and given more space, I should not doubt, such comment would be more pertinent to salute the discrimination and control sustained throughout the book.

No doubt, had Farr seen, for example, the Thirties exhibition that has recently closed at the Hayward Gallery, there would have been some alteration in the balance and emphasis of his penultimate chapter, devoted to that period, but it would not have affected his exposition very significantly. The big exhibition from the Tate, "Paintings of 1932", presides authoritatively on his dust jacket as it did over the main assembly of pictures in the Hayward show. The illustrations open with Whistler and "Art for Art's Sake" and the falling rocket that splatters the Rococo into black gutter, and the black gutter into a liberal section that announced the initiation of modern art in Britain. These close nonchalance on the traditional idioms of Rex Whistler and Francis Bacon. Between these extremes—the New English Art Club and the New English Art Club—Morris and Arts and Crafts; Camden Town and Vorticism; the die-die ding dong of the 1920s and 1930s; abstract, surreal, constructivist, the emergent New Old Masters, Moore and Nicholson—all find their place.

The treatment of architecture is no less comprehensive. Norman Shaw to Gropius and Maxwell Fry, with a very fine feeling for the position of English architecture in the world, is weighed against acknowledgment of the international revolution pioneered by the Bauhaus. The final chapter outlines a no less fundamental revolution in attitudes to art in patronage, in the structuring of art by museums, and the establishment of the new academic disciplines of art history.

Two more specialized surveys are focused on India—the *Indian of the Indian* by the Indian of the Indian, and the *Indian of the Indian* by the Indian of the Indian. The first is an account of the deposed and exiled Sikh princes of the Punjab and their portraits, these include Frederick Philipps, who became an officer in the Norfolk Yeomanry, and also, oddly, not mentioned, the author of two large and valuable volumes recording portraits in India, consisting of exercises, often rather fanciful, in the grand society manner of Reynolds, indicating that, for long though India might be, English life continued there unimpeded. With Zoffany and A. W. De la Motte, the Indian context, in the prospect of any general survey, is a rather small, but not a small, part.

In her *Indian and British Portraits 1770-1825*, Mildred Archer adds a further major contribution to our knowledge of art in India, which she has already enriched with so many studies. Investigation of the work of peripatetic British portraitists in India has almost stopped, following Sir William Foster's pioneer publications in the 1950s. This was partly no doubt due to the difficulty of research in India itself, and partly to the undeniable fact that the majority of the artists were very much of the second, or lower, rank, attracted to India by the prospect of easy financial gain, and by the prospect of a more or less

in his Romanes lecture last year Sir Hugh Casson deplored the lack of close scholarly attention paid to applied design (eg. workbooks and Matisse in comparison with the ceaseless investigations by art historians into fine art—yet another book on some famous name or other. The President of the Royal Academy's criticism has indeed some justification (and how refreshing to hear it from such a source), and the batch of books on aspects of British art published in 1979 that are here surveyed to fact include further contributions to the study of Hogarth, Turner, Constable and others. The best of them however are far from retreading known ground—and those on Turner are particularly valuable reminders of how poor neglect of our own great masters is only now being remedied—while among more general books Dennis Farr's *English Art 1870-1940*, extends its scope to embrace rather cabinets in booklets or luggage labels.

Even so, Farr acknowledges "perfunctory" treatment of some minor artists, and records regretfully the absence of almost any mention of photography. Valuable in this series is itself an old-fashioned concept, but nevertheless useful one—necessarily slow in brewing. Farr admits to fifteen years in the preparation of this one, and were he starting now he probably would not have dreamed of omitting photography.

Reassessment of art in the first half of the twentieth century, impelled, I sometimes feel, as much by death of significance in current art as for any other reason, proceeds at such dizzy speed, that the shape of the period and the character of its constituent objects seems to shift yearly if not monthly. Books such as this inevitably provoke reviewers to knowing comment on omissions, and given more space, I should not doubt, such comment would be more pertinent to salute the discrimination and control sustained throughout the book.

No doubt, had Farr seen, for example, the Thirties exhibition that has recently closed at the Hayward Gallery, there would have been some alteration in the balance and emphasis of his penultimate chapter, devoted to that period, but it would not have affected his exposition very significantly. The big exhibition from the Tate, "Paintings of 1932", presides authoritatively on his dust jacket as it did over the main assembly of pictures in the Hayward show. The illustrations open with Whistler and "Art for Art's Sake" and the falling rocket that splatters the Rococo into black gutter, and the black gutter into a liberal section that announced the initiation of modern art in Britain. These close nonchalance on the traditional idioms of Rex Whistler and Francis Bacon. Between these extremes—the New English Art Club and the New English Art Club—Morris and Arts and Crafts; Camden Town and Vorticism; the die-die ding dong of the 1920s and 1930s; abstract, surreal, constructivist, the emergent New Old Masters, Moore and Nicholson—all find their place.

The treatment of architecture is no less comprehensive. Norman Shaw to Gropius and Maxwell Fry, with a very fine feeling for the position of English architecture in the world, is weighed against acknowledgment of the international revolution pioneered by the Bauhaus. The final chapter outlines a no less fundamental revolution in attitudes to art in patronage, in the structuring of art by museums, and the establishment of the new academic disciplines of art history.

Two more specialized surveys are focused on India—the *Indian of the Indian* by the Indian of the Indian, and the *Indian of the Indian* by the Indian of the Indian. The first is an account of the deposed and exiled Sikh princes of the Punjab and their portraits, these include Frederick Philipps, who became an officer in the Norfolk Yeomanry, and also, oddly, not mentioned, the author of two large and valuable volumes recording portraits in India, consisting of exercises, often rather fanciful, in the grand society manner of Reynolds, indicating that, for long though India might be, English life continued there unimpeded. With Zoffany and A. W. De la Motte, the Indian context, in the prospect of any general survey, is a rather small, but not a small, part.

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Richard Dadd's "Vanishing Ambition" (1844). The series was done at the Bath Hospital, where Dadd had been confined since he killed his father in 1844. (He died in Broadmoor in 1887.) This picture, signed and dated April 13, 1854, is for sale at £5,500 in the annual exhibition of watercolours and drawings at Agnew's, 43 Old Bond Street, London W1, showing until February 15. The exhibition includes works by Rowlandson, Turner, Colnaghi, Constable, Ruskin, Samuel Palmer, Edward Lear and other artists.

DENNIS FARR: *English Art 1870-1940*. 436 pp with 230 black-and-white illustrations. Oxford University Press. £17.50.  
 T. S. AJAZUDDIN: *Sikh Portraits by European Artists*. 176 pp with 17 colour and 30 black-and-white illustrations. Sotheby Parke Bernet. £15.  
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 SUE MCKENNA: *British Silhouette Artists and their Work 1760-1860*. 798 pp with 31 colour and 1633 black-and-white illustrations. Sotheby Parke Bernet. £68.  
 ARIANA DAVIES: *Dictionary of British Portraiture*. 1—The Middle Ages to the Georgians—Historical Figures Born before 1700. Edited by Richard Ormond and Malcolm Rogers. 157 pp. Batsford. £20.  
 ELAINE KILMURRAY: *Dictionary of British Portraiture*. 2—Later Georgians and Early Victorians—Historical Figures born between 1700 and 1800. Edited by Richard Ormond and Malcolm Rogers. 231 pp. Batsford. £25.  
 EDWARD HOON: *Aesop in England: The Transmission of Aesop's Fables in Seventeenth Century Illustrations of Aesop's Fables*. 162 pp with 70 black-and-white illustrations. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville.  
 JOHN LAW: *John Nash, the Painter as Architect*. 136 pp with four colour and 142 black-and-white illustrations. Penderon Press. £14.50.  
 DOUGLAS PERCY BLISS: *Edward Bowden*. 200 pp with 11 colour and 25 black-and-white illustrations. Penderon Press. £17.50.  
 ANTHONY WEST: *John Piper*. 224 pp with 33 colour and 239 black-and-white illustrations. Secker and Warburg. £14.95.  
 MARY WESSELY: *Hogarth*. 191 pp with 73 colour and 250 black-and-white illustrations. Studio Vista. £11.95.  
 NORMAN L. GOLDBERG: *John Cromie the Elder*. Text and Critical Catalogue. 346 pp with 16 colour illustrations. 2 illustrations, 166 pp with 244 black-and-white illustrations. Penderon Press. £39.95 the set.

ANON: *Wilton: The Life and Work of J. M. W. Turner*. 577 pp with 59 colour and 1,552 black-and-white illustrations. Academy Editions. £49.50.  
 ERIC SHANN: *Turner's Picturesque Views in England and Wales 1825-1838*. Introduction by Andrew Wilton. 160 pp with 90 colour and 25 black-and-white illustrations. Chatto and Windus. £12.95.  
 ANON: *Wilton: Constable's English Landscape Scenery*. 111 pp with 49 black-and-white illustrations. British Museum Publications. £6.95.  
 JOHN RUSSELL: *Francis Bacon*. 132 pp with 37 colour and 138 black-and-white illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £5.50.  
 MARK CHAUHURY: *The Victorian Country House*. 467 pp with 33 colour and 427 black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £14.95.

Dr Archer, as usual, has drawn not only on an unparalleled knowledge of material in India but also on extensive research in contemporary sources. The book is very fully documented, and copiously illustrated; many of the portraits will be unfamiliar even to specialists, while she has identified, among the generally indifferent, one or two artists of original and real accomplishment, notably the mysterious Francesco Renaldi. In all, the work is a very positive contribution to the history of British art but to the history of the Raj itself.

Farr and Archer automatically make their place as the best guides to the history of British art in the last century. The last attempt at a dictionary of silhouette artists was Mrs Nevill Jackson's, a devoted pioneering effort published in 1938, long out of print, and inordinately out of date. Mrs McKenna's account expands Mrs Jackson's vastly, and is enriched not only by entries for artists discovered since Mrs Jackson's time, but by a plethora of references gathered from search in contemporary sources, and wonderfully comprehensive illustrations. History of the medium, techniques, aids to dating by costume, fakes, frames, are all discussed, and illustrated in detail in the preliminary chapters. I suspect most potential users would have found the book easier to use if the artists' entries had been presented in a single alphabetical sequence rather than divided into sections according to the techniques they used, but that is a minor quibble. Silhouettes, the "poor man's miniatures", were the equivalent of the photograph in the period, cheap and quick. Art historians tend to use them as they would use any other material art, black holes cut out of the living daylight—each one a negative of a person. But as such, they are disturbing and haunting, and also the only surviving record of the presence of thousands upon thousands who have gone before.

Another dictionary was begun in 1979 with the first two volumes of the Dictionary of British Portraiture, compiled respectively by Ariana Davies and Elaine Kil Murray. The last two are scheduled for 1980. This is perhaps a directory rather than a dictionary, but however described, it will be indispensable as providing the first steps for any investigation into the portraiture of British historical figures of any consequence. The qualifications for inclusion are provided by the existence or not, of an entry for the figure concerned in the DNB (this is the traditional yardstick for a portrait's admission into the primary collection of the National Portrait Gallery); it is obviously a fairly arbitrary one, and used very flexibly.

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## A Marriage

*Mondays, he trails burr-like fragments of the weekend to London.*  
*—a bag of soft, yellow apples from his trees—*  
*a sense of being loved and unloved.*

*He shows me a picture of marriage*  
*as a small, bright civilisation,*  
*its cities rosewood and broadloom,*  
*its religion the love of children.*

*Whom anger it survive,*  
*long ago, and who now return, like lambs,*  
*disarmed, adoring.*  
*His wife sits by the window,*

*one hand planting topestry daisies.*  
*She smiles as he offers her the perfect apple.*  
*On its polished, scented skin*  
*follows a Renaissance gliding.*

*These two have kept their places,*  
*trusting the old rules*  
*of decorous comportment. Now*  
*their lives are rich with ashes.*

*Later she'll carry a boxful*  
*of apples to school. Her six-year-olds*  
*will weigh, then eat, them, thrilling*  
*to a flavour sharp as tears.*

*I listen while he tells me about her sewing*  
*as if were the edges of dull cloth*  
*and his voice the looping needle*  
*sliding its tail in a dangle of wonderment.*

*He places an apple in my hand*  
*and, for a moment, it must become his child.*  
*To look at him, to see the way*  
*he would turn me cold with shame.*

Carol Rumens















# The spendthrift scholar

By James Sutherland

FAT HOGGERS:

Henry Fielding: A Biography  
217pp. Black. £8.95.  
0 230 40153

Like the children of Israel, a biographer of Henry Fielding finds himself called upon to make bricks with an inadequate supply of straw. He knows when Fielding was born and when he died; he knows that he wrote about twenty-five plays and three novels (counted four periodicals, and published a considerable number of occasional pieces in verse and prose. Those writings can be dated, and some of them provide a medium of biographical information. But when it comes to personal relationships, or what he was doing when he was not writing for a living, the biographer has little to go upon. We know next to nothing about his family life, and there are few comments on him by people who might be supposed to have known him well. Worst of all, very few of his private letters have survived; and why this should be so, no one has ever been able to explain satisfactorily. If you could have asked Samuel Richardson, he would probably have said it was because Fielding kept such low company and had little occasion to write to such rough acquaintances. But this will not do, for Fielding also kept in touch with some of his Eton contemporaries, who unlike himself, did not keep moving from one lodging to another, but lived in large ancestral homes, where letters were not so much thrown away as they were read. However, we may

account for the small number of surviving letters, there has never been, and there is not now, enough biographical material to indicate clearly what sort of man Fielding really was. And there is reason to believe that most of his contemporaries were equally in the dark about him.

In view of all this it may seem surprising that the two standard biographies, by W. L. Cross, *The History of Henry Fielding* (three volumes, 1918) and by P. Holmes, *Dudley Henry Fielding: His Life, Works and Times* (two volumes, 1952), should both be of inordinate length. Cross may be the more really forgiven, for his was the work of a pioneer whose excavations have been used by all later biographers, often without sufficient acknowledgement. But with Holmes, Dudden, who contributed little of importance in his 1,185 pages, length seems to have been directly, if paradoxically, due to his lack of material. With so few facts available, his work became an exercise in the peripheral: the background took over from the man.

It is in the credit of Professor Rogers that he has succeeded in writing a far shorter life that leaves out nothing essential, and which incorporates some interesting information that has come to light in recent years. Since he has already, in his *Crab Street: Studies in 18th Century London*, established himself as an authority on the literary underworld of the eighteenth century, he is well fitted to deal with an author like Fielding, who had to struggle for most of his literary life to make both ends meet. Holmes Dudden believed that Fielding's poverty had been exaggerated, his new biography is probably nearer the truth in keeping Fielding's straitened circumstances steadily before our eyes. It is no mean feat to write what he may have made from his plays without taking into account his chronic readiness

to spend it. Had he not been so often out of pocket there might have been fewer passages in his novels complaining about the rapacity of innkeepers and landladies. And there is a revealing comment in *Tom Jones*, when Tom has just had to settle a much larger bill than he might have expected: "This was, it seems, an ill-frequented by people of fashion; and I know not whence it is, but all those who get their livelihood by people of fashion, contract as much insolence to the rest of mankind as they really belonged to that rank themselves." This reflection seems to come from the gentleman born who knew what it was to have lackeys sniggering at his dusty wig and unfashionable shoes.

Professor Rogers is also right to begin and end his book by stressing the opposed elements in Fielding's character, which he is inclined to explain by his heredity: the "sober, meritorious" strain in his mother's side, and his unpredictable, aristocratic, bohemian inheritance from the Fieldings. This is expressed fairly enough by a "reformed" scholar, a reformer and a prodigal, a classicist and a slow-witted huckster; but the final element in the dichotomy, "on all sides and an all-round" surely sacrifices truth to allegorisation.

In one respect at least Professor Rogers scores to spare in the contradictory nature of his author, and to be a scholar or a popular journalist. He is apt to tell us that the Augustan satirists "had a sense of the value of the word, and even the value of the brotherhood, creeping like a Do Not Disturb sign when they got anywhere near matrimony." Such occasional infidelities may be due to a praiseworthy dislike of pedantry, or a determination to be too intelligent to detect, but he is far too intelligent a scholar to need such adroit devices to hold our attention.

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